



# Maricopa County Animal Care & Control



## *Thinking of adopting a Chow Chow*

An ancient breed, the Chow Chow has been found in artworks dating back more than 2,000 years. Centuries ago, the breed was used as a sporting dog "with great scenting powers, with staunchness on point, and with cleverness in hunting tactics." Mongolian pheasant were his prime target. Over the years, the breed also served as a draft dog and guardian.

Chows come in two coat types: smooth (short-haired) and rough (long-haired). The rough-coated Chow will need to be brushed at least twice a week; more during shedding seasons. Getting into a frequent grooming routine while the dog is young is important, as many older Chows resent handling they themselves have not solicited. Some mistakenly think the Chow is part bear due to his thick coat, sure footedness, and black tongue that looks similar to the polar bear's. Chow pups appear to be adorable teddy bears; but beneath that cuddly exterior beats the heart of a reserved, no nonsense individual. Those looking for a dog that will share "sloppy" exchanges of affection would be best served looking elsewhere.

Chow chows are very territorial. On the plus side, this makes them great property guards and very protective of owner and home. On the flip side, they have the reputation of being a one-person dog and may decide that certain family members are not allowed to approach toys, food or sometimes the dog himself. They are distrustful of strang-

ers and generally do not seek out affection from them.

A clean breed, the Chow is one of the easiest breeds to house-train. While they are considered very good problem-solvers, they get poor marks in obedience. Many other breeds will accept and give in to physical prompting when corrected for not complying with a command, but that type of handling (pushing down on the dog's hips to get a sit for instance) may result in the Chow "correcting" the handler - via a bite. One Australian Chow breeder who has been active in the breed for 35 years recommends clicker training as the best method to get the desired results.

The combination of territoriality, distrust of strangers and dislike of extraneous handling may explain why Chow Chows make the top ten breed list of biting dogs. Chows do best with experienced dog owners who respect the dog's wishes. A person looking to "dominate" a Chow may find himself being physically challenged by the dog. Benign leadership through positive reinforcement training and a respect for the dog's boundaries are needed when choosing a Chow Chow for your canine companion.

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